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Bilal bin Rabah

The Mu'adhdhin

(Caller to Prayer)

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In the Name of Allâh,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allâh [i.e., they have gone out for *Jihâd* (holy fighting), and showed not their backs to the disbelievers]; of them some have fulfilled their obligations (i.e., have been martyred); and some of them are still waiting, but they have never changed (i.e., they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allâh) in the least.” (33:23)



Publishers Note

All praises are due to Allâh, the Lord of all that exists. May Allâh's peace and blessings be upon His final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad, his family and his Companions.

Darussalam is pleased to present this valuable series of books, '*The Golden Series of the Prophet's Companions*' to the Muslim youth. The purpose of these books is to enlighten our youth about the lives of the greatest heroes of Islam, the Prophet's Companions. Also, we wish to increase the enthusiasm of the Muslim youth for following and adhering to their religion. In this way, these books achieve two very important tasks: educating our youth and encouraging them to be good Muslims.

In the following story, titled '*Bilal bin Rabah* ﷺ – *The Mu'adhdhin (Caller to Prayer)*', you will read about one of the most famous Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Bilal bin Rabah ﷺ. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam in Makkah and one of the slaves who accepted Islam at a time when becoming



a Muslim resulted in persecution and even death. In this story you will learn about the importance of patience and endurance in the face of adversity, as exemplified by our hero Bilal ؓ.

We hope that these books are beneficial to our Muslim youth, as they are the future of Islam. We, at Darussalam realize the importance of good Islamic literature for Muslim youth, especially in the West where non-Islamic influences are so strong. For this reason, we feel that the availability of this series will be a valuable aid in instilling a genuine love for Islam in our youth. We would like to thank the author, Mr. Abdul Basit Ahmad, the editors, Mr. Aqeel Walker and Mr. Muhammad Ayub Sapra for their diligent work in preparing this series. As Allâh says:

“Is there any reward for good other than good?” (55:60)

And our final word is that all praises are due to Allâh, the Lord of all that exists.

Abdul Malik Mujahid
General Manager

Foreword

Before the advent of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula and the whole world in general, lived in utter ignorance mixed with various forms of injustice and lack of any divine guidance.

Slave markets were common throughout the Arabian Peninsula especially at popular places. Being a commercial city and a point of attraction, Makkah was a central market of slave trade. Many slaves of different origins, especially those originating in Abyssinia could be found in the houses of the Makkans.

One of those slaves was our hero, Bilal bin Rabah ؓ. He was a dark skinned young man. He was brought from overseas to be a slave in the house of a Quraishite chief, Umayya bin Khalaf. All that is known about Bilal ؓ is that he was an Abyssinian. Like any other slave, he was the object of humiliation and oppression. He received all kinds of ill treatment from his master as well as from other people. He was not even treated as a human being. Anyone could freely call him the ‘son of the black woman’ without feeling any shame. Bilal ؓ spent a life of misery in the house of his master. He never tasted the true meaning of life and

always felt like a stranger amongst the people he worked for. He spent the whole day grazing his master's camels without showing any sign of discomfort or distress.

After the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was commissioned to proclaim the message of Islam, Bilal ؓ became a different person. As soon as he heard about the message of Islam, he showed interest and eagerness to learn more about the new religion. After full conviction that this was the true religion of Allâh, Bilal ؓ accepted Islam and became a fully dedicated Muslim. He followed the steps of the Prophet ﷺ and worked hard to support and spread the message of Islam. Bilal was greatly respected by his fellow Muslims. He held a very high position in Islamic history and became one of the prominent personalities in the history of Islam.

In the following pages, we are going to read more about this great man who, in spite of all tortures and whips of cruelty, kept steadfast to his faith, setting a unique example of endurance for all Muslims to follow.

Abdul Basit Ahmad

Introduction

The Period of Ignorance

The period that preceded the rise of Islam is termed as the 'Period of Ignorance.' This term only applies to the Arabian Peninsula. It means that the people who lived during that period received no divine guidance since the time of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. Therefore, they followed wrong ways of worship. They believed that worshipping idols was the right thing. They claimed that such idols would bring them closer to Allâh. The absence of guidance from Allâh made people practice numerous vices and injustices.

The Arabian Peninsula

The Arabian Peninsula was inhabited by different Arab tribes. These tribes lived in cities and in the desert. The people of cities mostly worked as traders while desert bedouins followed their flocks everywhere in the desert in search of food and water.

The land mainly consists of sandy

deserts, high mountains and deep valleys. The city of Makkah is located in a barren valley surrounded by black high mountains. The weather is extremely hot most of the year. Allâh says in the Qur'ân through the words of Ibrahim عليه السلام:

“O our Lord!. I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley, by Your Sacred House.” (14:37)

Water and pasture resources were also scarce. Therefore, sometimes clashes lasted for years that erupted for minor differences over the right to use water sources. To irrigate small farms or to have a supply of drinking water, the inhabitants of cities were forced to carry water on the backs of camels from distant places.

The Ka'bah

The Ka'bah in Makkah was the first House that was build by the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. Allâh ordered him to build this House on earth and to call the people to make pilgrimage to it. Ibrahim عليه السلام with the help of his son Ismâ'il عليه السلام built the

Ka'bah in the valley of Makkah. As Arabs were worshipping idols, they gathered a huge number of idols around it. Such idols were later removed by the Prophet ﷺ when he conquered Makkah and hence put an end to idolatry in the city.

In the year that the Prophet ﷺ was born, Abraha, the ruler of Abyssinia built a church and wanted Arabs to make pilgrimage to it instead of visiting the Ka'bah. An Arab man became angry to know the intentions of Abraha. Therefore, he threw filth in the church. When Abraha knew of the event, he prepared a big army and headed to Makkah with the intention to destroy the Ka'bah. Upon arriving near the city of Makkah. Allâh sent birds with small stones. The birds threw the stones on the army and killed most of it.

Vices of the Arabs

Injustices were dominating the societies of the city and desert alike. Any free man today might become a slave tomorrow and a girl whom Allâh had given the right to live was buried alive by her father for fear of bringing shame to him. Women were mostly

The Prophet ﷺ spent thirteen years in Makkah calling the people of Makkah and its surrounding areas to accept Islam. However, He did not realize much success. He visited some nearby towns like Tâ'if to preach Islam and to seek protection against oppression. His attempts did not meet success.

The Prophet ﷺ tried other ways of preaching Islam. He began calling visitors of Makkah to provide him with protection to be able to proclaim the Word of Allâh. A group of visitors from a town called Yathrib believed in the message of Islam and pledged to provide the needed protection. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions migrated to Yathrib to start a new stage of establishing the Islamic State.

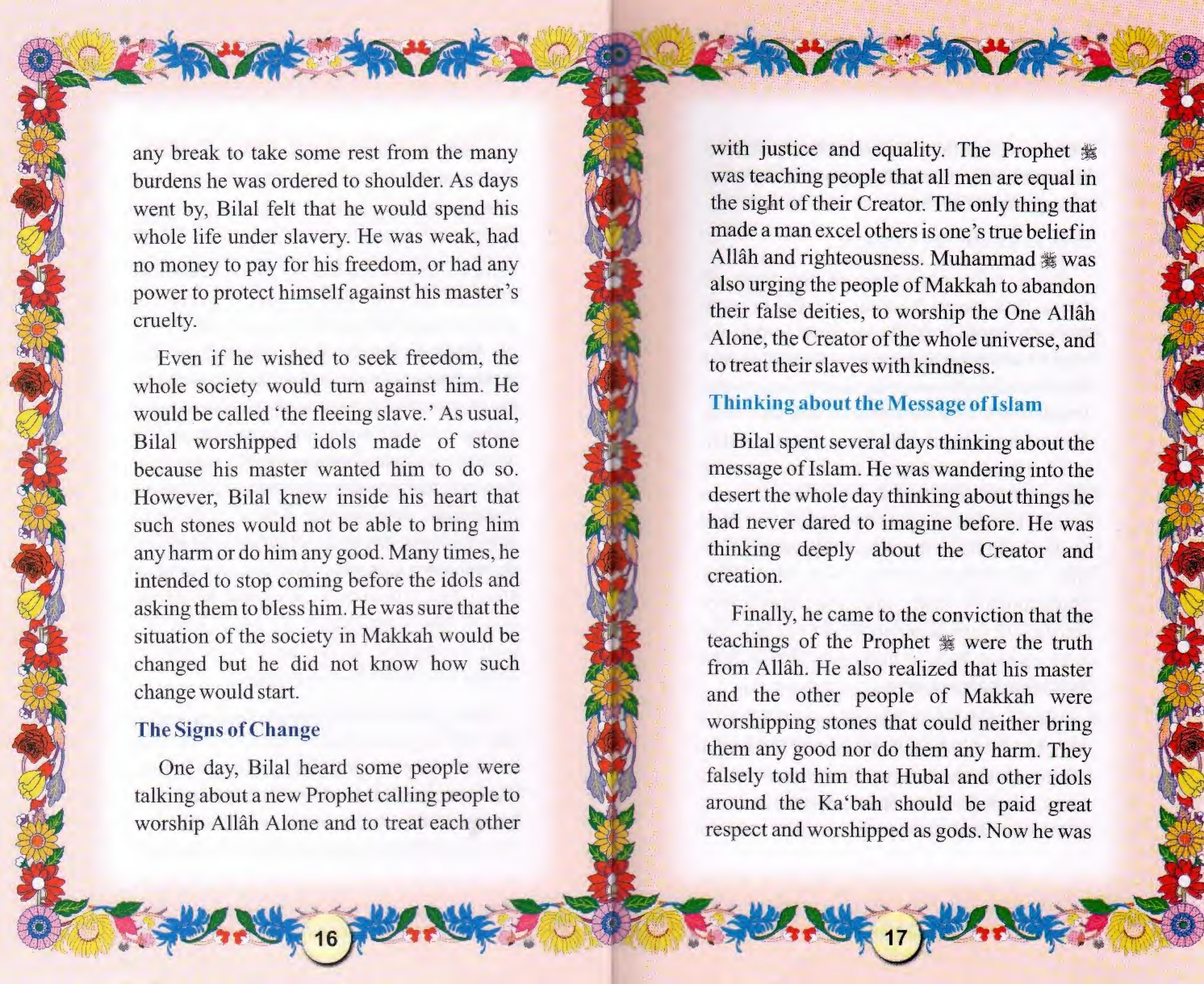


The Torch and Darkness

Background

Bilal bin Rabah was one of the many persons enslaved by a Quraishite chief named Umayya bin Khalaf. One of the tasks assigned by his master was to graze the camels under the heat of the sun in the desert of Makkah during the daytime. In the evening his task was serving food and wine to his master. His master was just like a beast eating to his full and going to bed drunk. He treated his slaves inhumanly. No one could say 'no' to his orders or show any sign of complaint. Umayya bin Khalaf liked Bilal only for his strong body; otherwise, he would have thrown him away like a useless rag or killed him mercilessly. Bilal had to do his best to satisfy his master. He had to keep his body strong and healthy so as to be able to defend his master and his property.

Umayya bin Khalaf bought Bilal while he was still a young boy. From the very first moment, he came inside his master's house, Bilal received all kinds of ill treatment and harassment by every member of the family. No one of them respected him or gave him



any break to take some rest from the many burdens he was ordered to shoulder. As days went by, Bilal felt that he would spend his whole life under slavery. He was weak, had no money to pay for his freedom, or had any power to protect himself against his master's cruelty.

Even if he wished to seek freedom, the whole society would turn against him. He would be called 'the fleeing slave.' As usual, Bilal worshipped idols made of stone because his master wanted him to do so. However, Bilal knew inside his heart that such stones would not be able to bring him any harm or do him any good. Many times, he intended to stop coming before the idols and asking them to bless him. He was sure that the situation of the society in Makkah would be changed but he did not know how such change would start.

The Signs of Change

One day, Bilal heard some people were talking about a new Prophet calling people to worship Allâh Alone and to treat each other

with justice and equality. The Prophet ﷺ was teaching people that all men are equal in the sight of their Creator. The only thing that made a man excel others is one's true belief in Allâh and righteousness. Muhammad ﷺ was also urging the people of Makkah to abandon their false deities, to worship the One Allâh Alone, the Creator of the whole universe, and to treat their slaves with kindness.

Thinking about the Message of Islam

Bilal spent several days thinking about the message of Islam. He was wandering into the desert the whole day thinking about things he had never dared to imagine before. He was thinking deeply about the Creator and creation.

Finally, he came to the conviction that the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ were the truth from Allâh. He also realized that his master and the other people of Makkah were worshipping stones that could neither bring them any good nor do them any harm. They falsely told him that Hubal and other idols around the Ka'bah should be paid great respect and worshipped as gods. Now he was

The True Believer

The next day, some of the Quraishite chiefs were sitting around the Ka'bah talking amongst themselves. They were laughing and mocking the Prophet ﷺ and his religion. Umayya bin Khalaf was there chatting with Abu Jahl and plotting to stop the new religion.

Cruelty shows its ugly Face

As they were talking, a man came to Umayya and whispered something into his ear. This man was the same one who had been watching Bilal's act towards the idol. Umayya became very angry at what he heard; his body shivered out of anger and his eyes became full of rage. He stood up and left the people he was sitting with. He could not believe that his slave would dare to spit on his god. He swore that he would take revenge against Bilal. He stood before Hubal and shouted that he would teach Bilal a very harsh lesson.

Umayya went back home like an angry bull and rushed inside Bilal's room with a long whip

in his hand. There he found Bilal ﷺ sitting in a calm and serene mood. He questioned him with anger:

"Is it true that you abandoned our religion and believed this enchanted man, you son of the black woman?"

Bilal ﷺ replied in a confident tone:

"Yes, Allâh had guided me to the true Faith."

Umayya was astonished to have such a reply. He stood with the whip in his hand trying to bargain with Bilal ﷺ. However Bilal would not accept anything. He asked him to abandon his new religion and to go back to the worship of the idols.

Allâh is One, Allâh is One

When finally realizing that Bilal was not going to accept anything in exchange for his Faith, Umayya called for his slaves to strip Bilal of his clothes, and to drag him on his face to the Ka'bah. At the Ka'bah, Umayya's slaves tied Bilal's body with chains of steel and began whipping him violently to make him recant.

Migration to Al-Madinah

Bilal ؓ was now free to call others to the new religion. He was doing his best to make Islam known to all the Arabs from the tribes living around Makkah who were coming to visit the Ka'bah. Although he was still treated very badly by the pagans, he never felt weak in the face of the difficulties he was still facing.

Bilal ؓ knew that one day the religion of Islam would spread all over the world. Although he was poor and weak, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ treated him equal to the rich and powerful men.

The pagans of Makkah were adding to their efforts and using all means possible to stop the Muslims from spreading Islam. After thirteen years of struggle and hardships, the Prophet ﷺ decided that the only way to propagate Islam in the Arabian Peninsula was to move out of Makkah to another land.

A Chance to escape Torture

Some men from the tribes Al-Aws and Al-

Khazraj from the city of Yathrib, who were visiting Makkah, heard the teachings of Islam and accepted the new religion. They had already heard the Jews living in Yathrib telling them about a new Prophet ﷺ, who would appear in the Arabian Peninsula. These people from Yathrib promised the Prophet ﷺ that they would help him and his followers and protect the new religion in their city. So the Prophet ﷺ decided that Muslims should migrate to Yathrib.

The Prophet ﷺ asked his Companions to migrate to Yathrib. He told them that they would be safe there. So the Muslims began migrating to Yathrib. Muslims, both individuals and in groups, left Makkah secretly.

After a short period, the Prophet ﷺ joined the Muslims in Yathrib from where Islam would spread to all parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

Establishing the New Islamic State

The first thing the Muslims (migrants and supporters) did after the Prophet ﷺ arrived in

The Eternal Freedom

After spending a few days with 'Umar ؓ in Jerusalem, Bilal ؓ left back to Damascus. One night he dreamt of the Prophet ﷺ blaming him for his long stay away from Al-Madinah. Bilal ؓ woke up very upset and immediately left Damascus to Al-Madinah.

As soon as he arrived there, he went to the Prophet's Mosque, stood in front of the Prophet's grave with his eyes full of tears and his tongue pronouncing with weak tone: 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allâh.'

Bilal ؓ sat in the Mosque for a long time recalling the pleasant days during the life of the Prophet ﷺ. Some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ asked him to give the *Adhân*. Bilal gave the *Adhân* and the whole city listened to the voice that refreshed their memory of historical days.

After a few days, Bilal ؓ left Al-Madinah back to Damascus. Days passed by very quickly and Bilal ؓ became an old man. He fell ill and died.

He was buried in Damascus.

Bilal's life was the life of a man, who suffered greatly as a slave, struggled greatly as a free Muslim, and then crossed the bridge of death to be in the company of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions forever in the Hereafter. Bilal ؓ was the *Mu'adhdhin* of the Prophet ﷺ alone. It is reported that he only gave the *Adhân* twice after the Prophet ﷺ had passed away.

A true Muslim had no choice but to follow the example of Bilal ؓ in announcing the eternal anthem of Islam. It is a duty on all of us to listen to the call of prayer and remember the first day when Bilal ؓ climbed over the roof of the first mosque in Islam to announce that Allâh is the Greatest. Not only this, but also we should positively respond to the call by going to the mosque to pray every time.

Hundreds of thousands of mosques are now spread all over the world. They are not built just for decoration, rather, they were built for a purpose; that is to go to when we hear the call to prayer and perform it as ordained by Allâh.